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Shift in Language and Threat to Survival in a South-west Nigerian Border Town

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Abstract:

The study examined the pattern of language use in Omuo with the aim of bringing to the fore the impact of multilingualism on the indigenous languages/dialects of Omuo people. The data for the study were obtained through the use of the questionnaire. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is Domain of Language Behaviour. The analyses were on the pattern of language use of Omuo dwellers in different domains- in the home, school, workplace, church and market. The study discovered that Omuo, Ahan and Omuooke languages/dialects, which were the major languages/dialects of the people, were less spoken among youths. This portrayed language endangerment. English/Yoruba took the lead in all the domains examined. The researcher, therefore, suggested that parents should be encouraged to transfer their in-group languages to their children in order to avoid language extinction and death.

Keywords: Language endangerment and shift, language use, language situation, language contact, multilingualism and border

1. Introduction

Language endangerment, and by extension, language death or extinction, has been in existence as a socio-linguistic phenomenon since antiquity (Lewis, Simons, and Fennig, 2015, p. 1). It results from language shift. When many languages co-exist in a single entity, one of the languages may expand and dominate other languages, thereby putting other languages in threatened positions. This eventually places a weaker language in a threatened position (Mufwene, 2002). According to UNESCO (2003), a language is endangered when it is on the path towards extinction. It is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next (Wamalwa & Oluoch, 2013). Ibrahim and Samalia rightly opine that "a language is endangered when it is on the path to extinction or when it is under threats of different kinds such that its chances of survival are put at stake." Latin, Sanskrit and some other classical languages have gone into extinction. In the words of Hornsby (2014), a language is deemed endangered when the children in a community are being spoken to in a language other than that of their parents. No doubt, there were languages that once lived but are no longer in use today.

Sociolinguists are generally concerned about language endangerment. This is because language loss is tantamount to the loss of culture, values, heritage and dignity of a group of people. The death of a language is synonymous with the termination of the ethnic group involved. Sarvi (2016, p. 61) points out, "The issue of language endangerment is a global concern that attracts and continues to attract the attention of linguists and researchers in other fields of study." Lewis (2006) indicates that the situation is sobering as 6,909 living languages are now listed in Ethnologue, and 457 are identified as nearly extinct, a category which represents a severe level of endangerment.

Crystal (2000) explains five level indicators of languages at risk; these indicators were explained by Sanjay KJ (2018), "The first level is safe; the second is viable, which indicates that its population base is sufficiently large and it is likely to survive for a long time." As for viable but small, such a language has more than 1000 speakers and is spoken in communities that are isolated but aware of their linguistic identity. As for endangered language, it is spoken by a fairly good number of people in favourable circumstances and with growth in the community so that survival of the language is possible. The last layer is nearly extinct, which is thought to be beyond the possibility of survival because such a language is spoken by a few elderly people.

The explanation above shows that some of the dialects and languages in our study area are nearly extinct, as these languages are mostly spoken by elders of the community. To many linguists, the picture of language endangerment across the world is quite grim. This is because when language loss occurs, it is synonymous with the loss of socio-linguistic identity, culture, and social values. Considering the global outlook of language endangerment, UNESCO ranks the degree of endangerment (and vitality) of the approximately 6000 world's languages thus:

Status of Languages	Percentages
Vulnerable	10%
Definitively Endangered	11%
Severely Endangered	57%
Critically endangered	9%
Extinct	4%
Total	100%

Table 1

Source: [Http://Www.Unesco.Org/Culture/En/endangeredlanguages.atlas](http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages.atlas)

Below is the African's outlook on language endangerment status according to Batibo (2005, p. 155) in Bello (2013, p. 17):

Status of Languages	Percentages
Relatively safe	336 15.8
Moderately endangered	1,287 60.4
Severely endangered	308 14.4
Extinct or nearly extinct	201 9.4
Total	2,132 100

Table 2

Batibo (2005) mentions the following indicators of highly endangered languages:

- The number of speakers currently using the language. A language with speakers of fewer than 5000 is deemed highly endangered.
- The degree of bilingualism is dominant in the language. Usually, any minority language whose speakers are highly bilingual in a dominant language is classified as endangered, and its speakers are likely to shift to the dominant language.
- Socio-economic disadvantage of the minority language is a factor that endangers the concerned language.
- The prevalence of negative attitudes towards the minority language. Here, the speakers see no value in their language, thus shifting to the dominant language in which the speakers are positively inclined.
- Non-transmission of the minority language to the younger generation. This usually happens when parents no longer teach their children the minority language.
- A situation whereby elderly people who are beyond childbearing age speak a minority language. This means that there would be no offspring to be taught the minority language.
- It is important to note that the above factors work together to bring about language endangerment in any society. However, "the most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next" (Fishman, 1991, in UNESCO, p. 7). This is in line with linguists' strong conviction that consistent intergenerational language transmission, i.e. from great-grandparent generation down to children, guarantees the language's survival (i.e. its vitality) most and any disruption thereof endangers the language most (Ahmed & Mijinyawa, 2021, p.10). This is a fact.

According to UNESCO (2003), nine factors determine language vitality or language endangerment:

- Intergenerational language transmission
- The absolute number of speakers
- The proportion of speakers existing within the total (global) population
- Language use within existing contexts and domains
- Response to language use in new domains and media
- Availability of materials for language education and literacy
- Government and institutional language policies
- Community attitudes toward their language
- Amount and quality of documentation

Language endangerment can eventually lead to language loss. During language loss—sometimes referred to as *obsolescence* in the linguistic literature—the language that is being lost generally undergoes changes as speakers make their language more similar to the language that they are shifting to. For example, it gradually loses grammatical or phonological complexities that are not found in the dominant language (Dorian, 1978).

2. Research Problem

Language, from time immemorial, has been viewed as a means of identity. Sociolinguists are always concerned about safeguarding languages and dialects. This is because saving indigenous languages is crucial to saving a whole generation of its speakers. It is, therefore, essential that research be conducted in border towns where so many languages co-exist in order to find out the state of these languages. This will help secure a generation, their cultural identity, dignity, and heritage. This study reveals the language situation in Omuo and discovers the pattern of language use in different domains of the town. It also shows the implications of the pattern of language use and choice on language maintenance

and shift in the selected border town. The pattern of language use in Omuo revealed that not less than three languages/dialects are endangered. The implication of the result shows that if care is not taken, a generation is about to lose their culture and identity.

3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- Exemplify the pattern of language use in different domains of the selected border town.
- Show the implications of the pattern of language use and choice on language maintenance and shift in the selected border town.

4. The Study Area

The area of study for this research work is Omuo-Ekiti. Geographically, Omuo-Ekiti is located in the Eastern part of Ekiti State in South-west Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Ondo-State and Kogi-State. Ekiti-East people are culturally homogeneous but heterogeneous in the language they use. They speak a dialect of Yoruba language known as Ekiti. They interrelate with one another under a congenial atmosphere. Some of the people speak the Ekiti dialect of the Yoruba language; however, little differences are visible, especially at the phonological level, to other Ekiti dialects. Major variations are also noticeable in the dialects of Omuooke and Ahan. Omuooke, one of the quarters in Omuo, migrated from Kogi. Hence, they speak a dialect close to that of Ijumu/Iyagba in Kogi State. Historically, Ahan people who reside in Ekiti-East migrated from the ancestral home of the Yoruba race- Okeagbe (near Oyin) in Ondo-State. They first settled in Oyin, a hill in Akoko, and from there, they migrated to our study area. Ogunmodimu (2013, p.2) reports, "Ahan people speak a language that is unique to them and almost unintelligible with the other dialects of Yoruba spoken in and around Omuo-Ekiti". According to Mr. Daramola Timothy (the Father of Emmanuel Anglican Church), the Ahan people came to Omuo-Ekiti (Ekiti-East) in the year 1942.

5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Domain of Language Behaviour. The theory was propounded by Fishman (1965, p.2). According to him, "It is possible to have different language behaviours depending on the topic, interlocutors and the settings. According to Fishman (2013, p.37), "Domain analysis concerns itself with the most parsimonious and fruitful designation of the occasions in which one language (variant, dialect, style, etc.) is habitually employed rather than (or in addition to) another." The model stipulates that there are certain institutional contexts in which one variety of language is considered more appropriate than another. Fishman maintains that this model is applicable in "those speech communities that are characterized by widespread and relatively stable multilingualism." This shows that this theory is relevant to the analysis of the topic under discussion since the topic seeks to find out speakers' choice of language in different domains or according to situations. Bilinguals or multilinguals can decide to use a low variety, even in places where a high variety of languages is expected. Also, parents may decide to use their in-group language while discussing with their own parents but may use a different one while communicating with their children. This depicts that participants mainly dictate language choice. Consequently, "no bilingual speaks all the languages he understands in each social setting. He uses whichever is appropriate to the domain, topic and expected pattern of behaviour" (Oyetade, 1990, p.81).

The domain analysis model is a suitable model for data analysis in this study since it is based on speakers' choice of language to widespread socio-cultural norms and expectations. In line with this model, the researcher investigates five domains: home, work, school, religion, and market. In addition, the study also provides the three major considerations in domain analysis: participants, location and topic. Respondents were also grouped into role-relations since language choice depends on the participants. The questionnaire provides, for example, in the home domain, role-relations such as parents-children and parents-family members. In the school, role relationships include students-teacher, junior-senior, and language choice at break time.

6. Research Design and Methodology

As a survey-based study, a quantitative method is adopted for data analysis. For data collection, close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, which comprise two parts, were designed. A total number of 320 questionnaires were administered, but 300 copies were retrieved. Various ethnic groups constitute the population of Omuo-Ekiti. As mentioned earlier, Omuo presently has seven different towns. All these towns were captured in this research because the researcher administered the questionnaires by dividing the towns according to the major demarcations, which are Omuooke and Omuoisale. All the towns are located either in Omuooke or Omuoisale. The respondents were selected based on the purposive sampling technique so that every ethnic group is well represented and also because the study must reveal language use in different settings.

7. Data Analysis

This section focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of data collected from Omuo in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The data were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 version. The purpose of this research was to analyze the impact of multilingualism on language use among Omuo dwellers and also reveal the pattern of language use in different domains of the selected border town. The findings were presented in tables and analyzed based on the responses of the respondents.

7.1. Analysis of the Pattern of Language Use in Different Domains

The responses to the questions of the administered questionnaires are presented and interpreted using simple percentage and frequency counts.

7.2. Language Use at Home

Which language do you use when talking with the following groups of people?

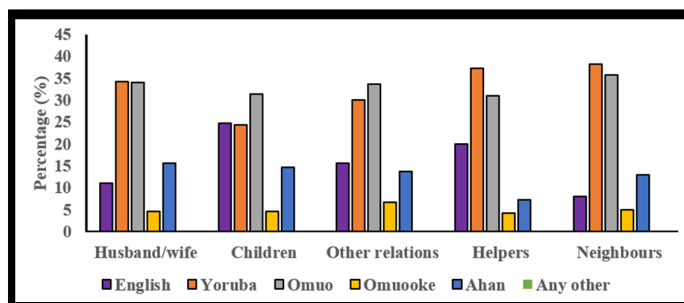


Figure 1: Presents Language Use by Studied Participants When Talking to Husband/Wife, Children, Other Relations, Helpers and Neighbours

Figure 1 above presents the language used by studied participants when talking to husband/wife, children, other relations, helpers and neighbours. The result clearly showed that the two dominant languages/dialects used by the respondents were Yoruba and Omuo. More than one-third of the respondents used Omuo to communicate with all categories of people except children (24.3%). Similarly, about one-third of the respondents used Omuo to communicate with spouses (34%), other relations (33.7%) and neighbours (35.7%), while 31.3 % and 31% used Omuo language to communicate with their children and helpers, respectively. Less than one-quarter (25%) used English, and less than 20% used Ahan to communicate at home. This result revealed that less than half of the respondents used Yoruba language (the regional language) to communicate with their children.

7.3. Language Frequently Used in School by Students

What Language Do You Use Frequently in School When Talking?	Language Use and Choice in School by Students					
	English	Yoruba	Omuo	Omuooke	Ahan	Other
Formally, with your teachers from different ethnic groups outside classroom lectures	215(71.7)	74(24.7)	5(1.7)	2(0.7)	4(1.3)	
Formally, with your teacher from the same ethnic group outside classroom lectures	110(36.7)	137(45.7)	33(11.0)	6(2.0)	14(4.7)	
Informally with teachers from a different ethnic group	210(70.0)	80(26.7)	6(2.0)	1(0.3)	3(1.0)	
Informally with teachers from the same ethnic group	99(33.0)	148(49.3)	30(10.0)	6(2.0)	17(5.7)	
During break time with your schoolmates from the same ethnic group	81(27.0)	112(37.3)	70(23.3)	12(4.0)	24(8.0)	1(0.0)
During break time with schoolmates from different ethnic groups	157(52.3)	125(41.7)	13(4.3)	4(1.3)	1(0.3)	
When discussing academic matters with schoolmates from the same ethnic group	155(51.7)	90(30.0)	27(9.0)	6(2.0)	22(7.3)	
When discussing academic matters with schoolmates from different ethnic groups	227(75.7)	66(22.0)	3(1.0)	4(1.3)		

Table 3: Language Use in School Domain

7.3.1. Percentage Responses Are Enclosed in Parentheses

Table 3 presents the language used by students. The result showed that less than three-quarters and one-quarter of the respondents frequently used English (n=215; 71.7%) and Yoruba (n=74; 24.7%), respectively, when talking formally with their teachers from different ethnic groups outside the classroom lectures. Regarding formal discussion with teachers from the same ethnic group outside classroom lectures, the majority of the students (n=137; 45.7%) frequently

used Yoruba, 110 (36.7%) used English, while 33 (11%), 6 (2%) and 14 (4.7%) indicated Omuo, Omuooke and Ahan languages respectively. Informal discussion with teachers from different ethnic groups was frequently dominated by the use of the English language (n=210; 70) and Yoruba (n=80; 26.7%). About half of the students (n=148; 49.3%) frequently used Yoruba when talking informally with teachers from the same ethnic group, while one-third (n=99; 33.3%) indicated the English language as a medium of communication. The majority of the studied participants (n=112; 37.3%) frequently used Yoruba in school when talking with schoolmates during break time; 81 (27%) and 70 (23.3%) indicated English and Omuo languages, respectively. Regarding frequently used language by students during a break when talking with schoolmates from different ethnic backgrounds, more than half (n=157; 52.3%) indicated English language, 125 (41.7%) respondents used Yoruba while less than 5% of the total sample reported Omuo (n=13; 4.3%), Omuooke (n=4;1.3%) and Ahan (n=1;0.3%). Over 50% of the studied participants frequently used English language when talking about academic matters with schoolmates from the same ethnic group (n=155;51.7%) and (n=227;75.7%) for different groups.

As expected, the result above showed that the use of English immensely dominated the language use pattern in the school domain. This was followed by Yoruba language. Next to Yoruba is Omuo dialect, while Omuooke and Ahan recorded the lowest score. English language was used mainly in discussing matters relating to academic and classroom lesson. It was also used for discussing informal matters with those from other ethnic groups.

7.4. Language Use in School Domain

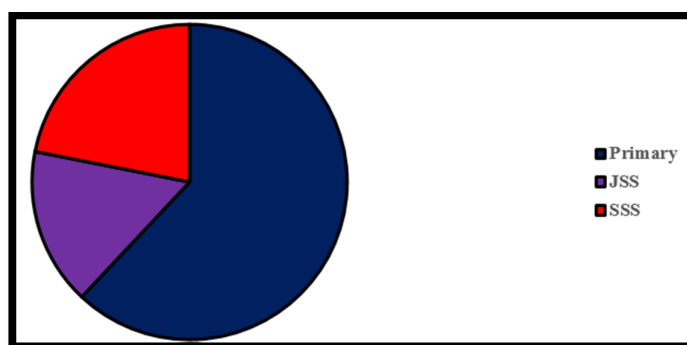


Figure 2: Language Use and Choice in School by Teachers

7.4.1. Classes Taught by Teachers

Figure 2 above presents the class taught by teachers. The majority of the respondents (n=85;62%) were primary school teachers, while 22 (16.1%) and 30 (21.9%) were JSS and SSS teachers, respectively.

Language Use and Choice in School by Teachers	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do the children in your class speak the same indigenous language?	Yes	45	30.0
	No	105	70.0
If no, which of the following languages/dialects do they speak?	Yoruba	75	68.2
	Omuo	8	7.3
	Omuooke	5	4.5
	Ahan	4	3.6
	Others	18	16.4
Are there children in your class who understand their indigenous languages/dialects but do not speak them?	Yes	63	32.8
	No	129	67.2
If yes, why	Because the school code and conduct didn't allow any language except English.	40	57.9
	Some are non-natives, and they don't understand the language.	26	37.6
	They do not speak it because they are shy.	3	4.3
What language do you use most of the time in your classroom?	English	172	57.3
	Yoruba	117	39.0
	Omuo	1	3
	Omuooke	3	1.0
	Ahan	3	1.0
	Others	4	1.3

Language Use and Choice in School by Teachers	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
How often do you use English in your classroom?	Never	7	2.3
	A few times a week	10	3.3
	Once a day	18	6.0
	A few times a day	38	12.7
	Many times a day	135	45.0
Do you ever use any of the indigenous languages to explain something that the students do not understand?	In every lesson	92	30.7
	Yes	254	84.7
Which of the indigenous languages do you normally use when explaining things to the students?	No	46	15.3
	Yoruba	210	70.0
	Omuooke	13	4.3
	Omuo	75	25.0
Why?	Ahan	2	0.7
	For them to understand better	151	96.1
	Because I prefer it	4	2.0
	Because the language has wider coverage	3	1.9

Table 4: Language Use and Choice in School by Teachers

The table above reveals that 105 (70%) respondents, representing the majority, reported that the children in their classes spoke different indigenous languages, while less than one-third (n=45;30%) indicated homogeneity of indigenous language. This further clarified the fact that Omuo was a multilingual environment.

The table above shows that 75 (68.2%) of those who spoke the different indigenous languages, representing the majority indicated Yoruba, while 8 (7.3%), 5 (4.5%), 4 (3.6%) and 18 (16.4%) reported Omuo, Omuooke, Ahan and other languages/dialects respectively. This showed that Yoruba, which was the regional language of the study area, dominates other languages in the school domain. It also showed that about one-third (n=63; 32.8%) of the respondents said that there were children in their classes who could understand any of the indigenous languages but did not speak them, while 129 (67.2%) disagreed. In respect to the reasons some students who understood their indigenous languages did not speak them in school, the table above revealed the following reasons: school code and conduct did not allow any language except English (n=40, 57.9%), they were not familiar with their language (n=3; 4.3%), Some were not native and they did not understand the language (n=26; 37.6%), they did not speak it because they were shy (n=3; 4.3%). This result revealed that English was the language accepted for instruction in schools.

Again, the table above presents the language frequently used in the classroom. The result showed that 172 (57.3%) respondents, representing the majority, indicated English language. This was closely followed by Yoruba (n=117; 39%), Omuooke (n=3; 1%) and Ahan (n=3; 1%), while Omuo (n=1; 0.3%) was the least in the ranking order. The table above also presented the frequency of English language usage in the classroom. The result showed that less than half of the study participants (135, 45%) used English language many times a day, whereas 10 (3.3%), 7 (2.3%), 38 (12.7%) and 92 (30.7%) respondents used English language a few times a week, once a day, a few times a day and in every lesson respectively. However, 18 (6%) respondents never used the language. These results confirmed that English is the language of instruction in the school domain and also revealed that some teachers, though very few, are adhering to the tenet of the NPE, which says primary school pupils in primary 1-3 should be taught using their mother tongue. Therefore, the respondents who agreed that they never used English in the classroom to teach were probably those who taught primary one to three classes. Although the respondents in the category were few, the result was commendable. It showed that teaching students using their mother tongue is possible in a multilingual environment, especially if there is a regional language in place.

Furthermore, the table also showed that more than three-quarters of the respondents, 254(84.7%), used any of the indigenous languages to explain things that students did not understand, while 46 (15.3%) disagreed. Moreover, the table also presents the indigenous language normally used when explaining things to the students. The following responses were given: Yoruba (n=210; 70%), Omuo (n=75; 25%), Omuooke (n=13; 4.3%) and Ahan (n=2; 0.7%). The result affirmed that Yoruba language also enjoyed wide usage, being the regional language of the study area. The table also presents reasons for respondents' choice of classroom language. The result showed that the majority of the study participants (n=151; 96.1%) indicated 'for better understanding', while (n=4; 2.0%) said they preferred it, and (n=3; 1.9%) said because it has wider coverage.

Language Use and Choice	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Religion	Christian	277	92.3
	Muslim	21	7.0
	Others	2	0.7
Are there religious places or centres you attend?	Yes	208	85.6
	No	35	14.4
Do you attend church services	Yes	267	93.7
	No	18	6.3
What language/s is/are your church services held in?	Yoruba	40	15.0
	English	226	85.0
What language/s does the Pastors use in your church?	Yoruba	46	16.3
	English	236	83.7
What language/s does the Imams use in your mosque?	Yoruba	32	29.1
	English	78	70.9
What language/dialect do you normally use for private prayers?	English	31	10.4
	Yoruba	226	75.6
	Omuo	32	10.7
	Omuooke	3	1.0
	Ahan	7	2.3
What language does your Pastor/Imam use when preaching in the church/mosque?	English	29	9.7
	Yoruba	262	87.3
	Omuo	6	2.0
	Omuooke	1	0.3
	Ahan	2	0.7
Is there any church/mosque meant mainly for people from your ethnic group?	Yes	42	14.0
	No	258	86.0
If your answer to the above question is yes, state the reason	Because I prefer it	29	69.0
	It can be easy for us to use	2	4.8
	For easy transportation	2	4.8
	Because he wants all members to be cleared	1	2.4
	So as to bridge the gap and create effective communication	2	4.8
	For more understanding	2	4.8
	Because there is an English Assembly for people from other ethnic groups	4	9.5

Table 5: Language Use in Religious Domain

The result in table 5 above shows that the majority of the study participants (n=277; 92.3%) were predominantly Christians, 21 (7%) were Muslims, while less than 1% (n=2; 0.7%) practised other religions. This shows that Omuo-Ekiti is densely populated by Christians. It also revealed that more than three-quarters of the study participants (n=208; 85.6%) affirmed that there were religious places or centres they attended, while 35 (14.4%) disagreed.

Again, it showed that 267 respondents, representing 93.7% of the total sample, attended church services, while 18 (6.3%) disagreed. The table also clearly revealed that, out of 267 respondents who attended church services, more than three-quarters (n=226; 85%) indicated that their church services were held in English language, while 40 (15%) respondents indicated Yoruba language. The result showed that English dominated the language use of the religious domain, specifically in the church domain.

Table 5 also shows that the majority of the study participants (n=236; 83.7%) indicated the English language as a medium of communication by the pastor in the church, while 46 (16.3%) reported Yoruba. It also revealed that 32 (29.1%) of the total sample indicated the Imams used Yoruba while 78 (70.9%) respondents representing the majority indicated English language. Here, English dominated the pattern of language use. Another part of the table shows that about three-

quarter (n=226; 75.6%) of the participants representing the majority, normally use Yoruba for private prayers, 31 (10.4%), 32 (10.7%), 3 (1%) and 7 (2.3%) indicate English, Omuo, Omuooke and Ahan respectively.

Furthermore, the table shows that the majority of the respondents (n=262; 87.3%) reported that their Pastor/Imam used Yoruba when preaching in the church/mosque, 29 (9.7%) indicated the English language, while 6 (2%) used Omuo Language. However, less than 1% indicated Omuooke (n=1;0.3%) and Ahan (n=2; 0.7%) languages. The outcome of the question above is quite different from the first one, which asks about the language used by the pastor/Imam in the church/mosque. Here, Yoruba is predominantly used for preaching. This means that at the level of formal communication, the regional language of the people enjoyed prominence. This was followed by English, while other indigenous languages, that is, the in-group languages of the people, were not so much in use. This shows that the level of the respondents' in-group languages/dialects (Omuo, Ahan & Omuooke) maintenance effort is low.

The table above also shows that 42 (14%) respondents agreed that there was a church/mosque meant for people from their ethnic group, while 258 (86%) disagreed. The table above shows that more than half of the respondents (n=29; 69%) preferred to attend a church meant for their ethnic group because they preferred to listen to their pastors in their ethnic group. Other reasons include ease of use (9.5%), effective communication (12%), and an English assembly for people from other ethnic groups (9.5%).

7.4.2. Language Use in the Office by the Study Participants (Which Language Do You Use in the Office While Discussing)

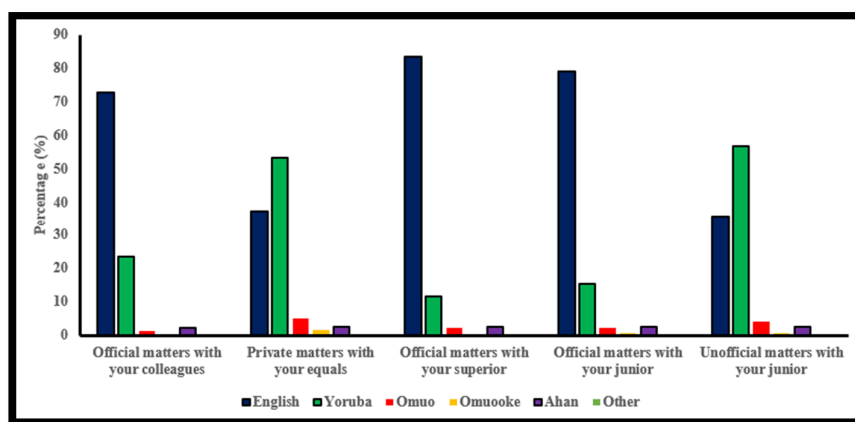


Figure 3: Language Use in the Office by the Study Participants

Figure 3 above presents the language used in the office by the studied participants. The result showed that more than half of the studied participants used English language in the office when discussing official matters with: colleagues (n=218; 72.7%), superior (n=250; 83.3%), and junior (n=237; 79%). Also, more than half of the studied participants indicated the use of Yoruba when discussing private/unofficial matters with their equals (n=160; 53.3%) and junior (n=170; 56.7%). However, Omuo, Omuooke, Ahan and other languages were rarely used while discussing both official and unofficial matters. The result above revealed that respondents recorded the highest pattern of language use for English during formal discussions.

	Language Use and Choice in School by Students					
	English	Yoruba	Omuo	Omuooke	Ahan	Other
Official matters with subordinates	226 (75.3)	59 (19.7)	8 (2.7)	1 (0.3)	6 (2.0)	
Unofficial matters with Subordinates	94 (31.3)	171 (57.0)	19 (6.3)	7 (2.3)	9 (3.0)	
Official matters with superiors	241 (80.3)	32 (10.7)	18 (6.0)	1 (0.3)	8 (2.7)	
Unofficial matters with superiors	117 (39.0)	152 (50.7)	17 (5.7)	5 (1.7)	9 (3.0)	
Official matters with juniors	187 (62.3)	81 (27.0)	21 (7.0)	3 (1.0)	8 (2.7)	
Unofficial matters with juniors	105 (35)	152 (50.7)	19 (6.3)	8 (2.7)	16 (5.3)	

Table 6: Language Use in the Office When Talking with Those Who Speak the Same Ethnic Language as Yours When Discussing

7.4.3. Percentage Responses Are Enclosed in Parentheses

The table above presents the language used by the studied participants in the office with those who spoke the same ethnic language as theirs. The result showed that the majority of the respondents used English language in the office with those who spoke the same ethnic language when discussing official matters with subordinates (n=226; 75.3%), superiors

(n=241; 80.3% and juniors (n=187; 62.3%). Also, Yoruba language dominated the unofficial discussion of studied participants in the office with subordinates (n=171; 57%) and superiors (n=152; 50.7%). English dominated the office domain, especially when discussing official matters with any category of worker. The next language that followed was the Yoruba language.

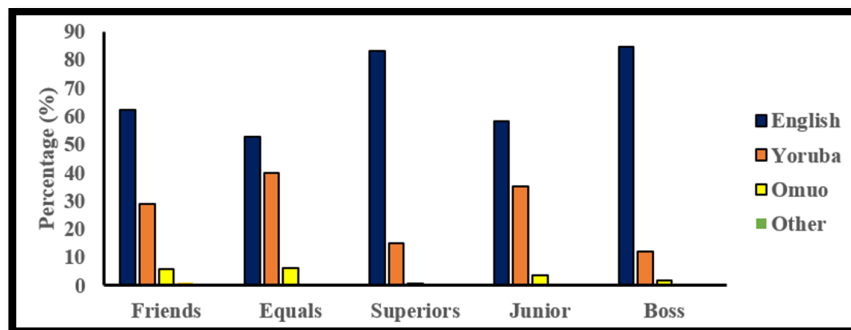


Figure 4: Language Use in Office by Study Participants When Talking with Those Who Speak a Different Language

Figure 4 presents language use by studied participants in the office when talking with those who speak a different language. The result showed that more than half of the studied participants in the office used English and Omuo when talking with friends (n=187; 62.3%), equals (n=158; 52.7%), superiors (n=250; 83.3%), juniors (n=175; 58.3%) and boss (n= 254; 84.7%) who spoke a different language. However, Omuo, Ahan and other languages were rarely used by the studied participants when talking with those who spoke a different language.

7.5. Language Use in the Market

7.5.1. Which Language Do You Use in the Market?

	English	Yoruba	Omuo	Ahan	Other
When buying or selling to a customer who speaks your own language?	16 (5.3)	120(40.0)	114(38.0)	38(12.7)	12(4.0)
When talking or speaking to a customer who speaks a different language from your own?	115(38.3)	170(56.7)	14(4.7)	1(0.3)	-

Table 7: Language Use in Utility Domain

7.5.2. Percentage Responses Are Enclosed in Parentheses

The above table presents language use and choice in the market by the respondents. The result showed that 120 (40%) and 114 (38%) used Yoruba and Omuo languages, respectively, when buying or selling to a customer who spoke their own language. However, more than half (n=170; 56.7%) and more than one-third of the studied participants used the Yoruba language and English language, respectively, when talking or speaking to a customer who spoke a different language from their own.

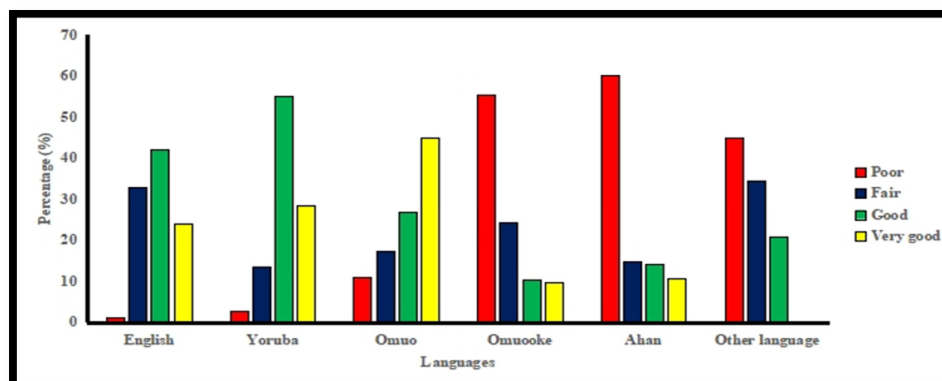


Figure 5: Level of Proficiency of Children below 13 Years in Speaking Any of the Languages (English, Yoruba and Other Indigenous Languages/Dialects in Ekiti-East)

Figure 5 presents the level of proficiency of children below 13 years in speaking the selected languages. The result showed that an appreciable proportion of the children below 13 years demonstrated high ($n=77$; 42.1%) and very high ($n=44$; 24%) level of proficiency in speaking English Language. Similarly, 101 (55.2%) and 49 (26.8%) of the participants demonstrated a high level of proficiency in speaking Yoruba and Omuo languages, respectively. More than a quarter, 52 (28.4%), and more than one-third, 82 (44.8%), indicated a very high level of proficiency in speaking Yoruba and Omuo languages, respectively. However, there was a sharp decline in the level of proficiency of the respondents in speaking Omuo (poor: 55.5%; fair: 24.2%), Ahan (poor: 60.2%; fair: 14.8%) and other languages (poor: 44.8%; fair: 24.5%). This result depicts that more than half of the respondents were not well proficient in their in-group languages, most especially Omuo/Yagba and Ahan languages/dialects. However, it is important to note that these dialects/languages are also included in the languages in use in Ekiti-East, although they are gradually losing speakers among the younger generations.

8. Findings and Discussions

This study investigated language endangerment in Omuo. Considering the pattern of language use at home, the shift to Yoruba by speakers of these languages (Ahan, Yagba & Omuo), however, seems to be pronounced in our study. This is an indication of language endangerment. Yoruba, which is a regional language in the area, dominates the language use at home among the children and youths, as more than half of the respondents agreed that the Yoruba language was more in use among the younger generation than the Omuo dialect, which was the in-group language of the majority of the older generation (see figure 2). On close observation, one is bound to notice that native speakers of these languages/dialects (Omuo, Yagba & Ahan), most especially in the home domain of their children. This language situation is worthy of note in that, as earlier mentioned in the introduction of this work, "Once the domain of home has been affected, a language becomes endangered" (Heinrich, 2015, p.613). The younger generations are very important in the maintenance of the culture and language of any group of people as they are involved in the passing down of their native language to the next generation that comes after them. When a language loses popularity in use among the younger generations, especially at home, that language may become endangered in a multilingual society.

Comparing the language use at home among the older generation with that of the younger generations, the older generation used Omuo to communicate among themselves while they used Yoruba to communicate with their children in the home domain. This affected the proficiency of their children in their in-group language. The children recorded poor proficiency in Omuo, Yagba and Ahan. Their proficiency in Yoruba is better than that of their in-group languages. The age and education of these respondents may be the factors affecting their proficiencies in their in-group languages. Children below the age of 13 are poor in the use of Omuo, Ahan and Yagba, while adults speak these languages better (See figure 1 and table 3). These same sets of children are fluent in Yoruba. The reason for this may be as a result of their exposure to the language at home and in school. This is because Yoruba is the lingua franca in the community. Thus, it is taught as a subject in the schools located in our study area. Our result is, however, similar to that of Oyetade (2007, p.177), where Yoruba dominates the language used at home instead of Akoko, which was the in-group language of the people. He, therefore, concludes, "Yoruba has crept into the domains where one would have expected the exclusive use of Akoko language". The observation is also in line with what operates in Erushu as conveyed by Dada (2006), "Yorùbá features in virtually all the domains (primary and secondary) listed above no matter how minimal. The foregoing probably explains why the population of those speaking Erùshù is declining in favour of Yorùbá, the big fish swallowing up all the smaller fish in its environs."

In addition, Bamigbade (2018) also worked on Language use and the endangerment of Etuno in Igarra, Akoko-Edo, Nigeria. His result shows that the linguistic relationship between the adult speakers and the younger speakers indicates that adult speakers who should serve as intermediaries in transmitting Etuno from the younger speakers maintain Etuno while interacting with elderly speakers and adult speakers. However, while interacting with their younger ones, they switch to Yoruba, English or Nigerian Pidgin (NP). However, there is a wide difference between what operates in Omuo and that of Yoruba and Egun, as reported by Onadipe (2013), where Egun enjoys wider use than Yoruba (30,8% to 27,7%). According to her, Egun is mostly used among parents and children. This has helped maintain the language to date, but the situation in our study area needs attention.

Under the research problem section: "the most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next" (Fishman, 1991 in UNESCO, p.7). "These, in addition to some other indicators, have been pencilled down in the linguistic literature as the core signs and symptoms of endangered languages." (Ibrahim & Samaila, 2021, p.10). It is important also to note that while the majority of the adults are multilingual, incoming generations are potential bilinguals since many of them cannot communicate fluently in their mother tongue. The implication is that if this language situation is sustained, this border town, in the near future, may become a bilingual society.

Despite the aforementioned problems of language shift and endangerment, table 6 also revealed that English immensely dominated the language use pattern in the education domain. This was followed by Yoruba language. Next to Yoruba was Omuo dialect, while Yagba and Ahan recorded the lowest score. This shows that Omuo, Ahan and Yagba play little or no significant role in the school domain. English language was used mainly in discussing matters relating to academic and classroom lessons. It was also used for discussing informal matters with those from other ethnic groups. However, it should be noted that in this domain, during formal conversations with people from the same ethnic groups, the respondents indicated the use of their native languages. This result may be predicated on the people's inability to fluently speak the foreign language or a revelation of their loyalty to their language. It also revealed that language use can

vary depending on role-relations. Interlocutors may deliberately vary their language choice depending on the topic of discussion and the people they are interacting with. However, on a larger scale, English has been revealed as the language of instruction by the teachers.

On issues pertaining to the implementation of the National Policy on Education, table 6 presents English as the language mostly used in classrooms as the language of instruction. The result revealed that English enjoyed wider usage than all other languages. It is obvious that teachers in this community seem to disapprove of the provision of the National Policy on Education (NPE). Most of the respondents were primary school teachers, yet they agreed that they use English as their medium of instruction in the classroom (See figure 2). This revealed that many of them were not strictly following the National Policy on Education (NPE) provision, which stipulates that a child should be taught using his mother tongue for the first three years of education, but where this is not practicable, the language of the immediate environment must be taught. This shows that the NPE provision is not in use in many primary schools in our study area. English dominates the language used in the education domain of society, while indigenous languages are relegated to the background. It is, however, important to point out that our investigation revealed that some teachers (2% of the total number of respondents), though very few, agreed that they never used English. This result may depict that some of the respondents, though few, are adhering to the tenets of the NPE.

However, when asked about the language used for explaining difficult topics to the pupils, almost all the respondents indicated (Yoruba). The use of Yoruba is explainable as it is the language of the immediate environment. Its use is in line with the provision of the NPE (2004). The policy clearly states in section 2 subsection 14c that the government shall ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment in the first three years of school. The result further affirmed the claim earlier mentioned under the research problem of the work that some linguists believed that students learn better in their mother tongue. Pinnock (2009, p.9) also notes, "72% of out-of-school children are found in linguistically diverse countries that enforce a non-indigenous language for schooling". He thus notes the value of mother-tongue-based education, which can improve the reach and quality of education. According to UNESCO (2005, p.1), "one of the biggest obstacles to Education for all remains in place: the use of foreign languages for teaching and learning". This result revealed the importance of indigenous language for teaching (See table 6). The researcher, however, observed that the teacher uses Yoruba language for explaining difficult topics while, on a larger scale, English dominates the language use in the school domain. Moreover, efforts should therefore be geared towards the accomplishment of the policy that indigenous languages should be used as means of instruction at the primary stage of instruction as stipulated in the National Policy on Education.

Meanwhile, in the work/office domain (See figure 3 and table 4), the result revealed that respondents recorded the highest pattern of language users for English among all categories of people. English dominated the office domain, especially during formal conversations with any category of worker, while Yoruba had the highest pattern during informal conversations. English also thrives as the language used for formal conversation because it is the nation's official language. This result shows a slight difference from Onadipe's (2015) report on Egun language use patterns in the workplace. In Egun, there is a high prevalence of the use of English in the entire context presented. English was predominantly used for formal discussions in Omuo, while Yoruba took the lead in informal discussions. This shows that the language situation in Omuo, to some extent, favours the regional language of the people. It reveals that Yoruba is a living language in use in Omuo. However, it is important to note that Omuo, Ahan and Yagba were rarely used by the study participants when talking with those who spoke a different language in the office domain. Apart from Yoruba, other indigenous languages were not used so much in the work domain. This result implies that the in-group languages/dialects of the people are at risk of extinction. When a language loses users during formal and informal conversation in any domain, such a language gradually loses its grip over society. It shows that the people's attitude towards that language is negative. People should be able to discuss unofficial matters in informal situations among all levels of workers using their in-group languages/dialects. It seems that the people are not loyal to their language. Fishman (1991, p.4) rightly mentioned, "the loss of a language may also lead to a loss of identity." Our result is similar to that of Dada, who says, "More alarming, however, is the dominance of Yorùbá in virtually all the different domains to the extent that its use is a *sine qua non* to the survival of individuals in the community, thus revealing the position of endoglossic bilingualism in the community of study."

In addition, the result in table 7, as discussed earlier, showed that English also dominated the language use of the religious domain as most of the respondents agreed that their Pastors/Imams use English as a medium of communication in their services. However, when asked about the language used for preaching, more than half of the respondents indicated Yoruba, while other indigenous languages were not used so much for preaching. This means that at the level of formal communication, the regional language of the people enjoys prominence. This is followed by English, while, as earlier mentioned, other indigenous languages, that is, the in-group languages of the people, were not so much in use. This shows that the level of the respondents' in-group languages/dialects (Omuo, Ahan and Yagba) maintenance effort is low. However, when asked about the language used for private prayers, the result revealed that Yoruba took the lead. English came next, while the peoples' in-group languages, such as Omuo, Ahan and Omuooke, were relegated to the background. These responses showed that the people had a preference for the use of Yoruba in the religious domain, even for their private prayers. This result revealed that the in-group language of the people was gradually losing speakers, which puts them in a dangerous position since language depicts the identity of people; any ethnic group without a language of its own will soon be forgotten. This is one of the dangers of a multiplicity of languages, especially in border towns, as clearly displayed in the result above since there is no church for any ethnic group in particular; hence, the choice of Yoruba, which

is a regional language of the people and also the choice of English, a language understood by almost everyone in the community ... since Omuo is densely populated by literate people.

Table 5 presents the language use of study participants in the utility domain (market). The result showed that 120 (40%) and 114 (38%) used Yoruba language and Omuo language, respectively, when buying or selling to a customer who spoke their own language. However, more than half (n=170; 56.7%) and more than one-third of the study participants (n=115; 38.8%) used Yoruba and English language, respectively, when talking or speaking to a customer who spoke a different language from their own. Yoruba dominates the language pattern in the market as it takes the lead in all circumstances associated with buying and selling among people from the same ethnic or from other ethnic groups.

Moreover, the overall outlook of this research work pinpoints the fact that no fewer than three languages are in danger of disappearing- Omuo, Ahan and Yagba languages/dialects are relegated to the background in all domains of the community. The direction of language shift is clear. Yoruba takes the lead in the primary domains, especially among youths, while also reigning predominantly in secondary domains. Omuo in-group language has no significant position. This is unconnected to the position accorded English and Yoruba (being one of the three major languages in Nigeria) in the language policy of the country. Dada (2006) rightly posited that the official language policy in Nigeria, as contained in sections 55 and 97 of the 1999 constitution as well as in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1981, seems to be one in support of the policy that states the unsupported co-existence of minority languages. The policy simply translates into an unsupported co-existence for the minority languages since only Hausa, Igbo, Yorùbá and English have been accorded the status of national official languages. According to Fakuade (2004, p.15), whereas the policy clearly spells out functional roles for the three national languages in law-making and education, it appears somewhat reticent on the roles for the remaining 387 or so indigenous languages. Moreover, the policy puts all the indigenous languages at par in terms of their functional role in primary education when the government, in actual fact, is not ready to develop these languages. This has relegated many minority languages, including Omuo, Ahan and Yagba, to the background. Parents prefer to teach their children a language that will help them communicate better in their schools.

9. Conclusion

This research work, which focuses on the pattern of language use at the different domains of our study locations, has contributed to the existing knowledge on language use, language shift, language endangerment and language maintenance. It has shed more light on the multilingual nature of border towns. It has also revealed that some languages are on their way to extinction. The study, therefore, suggests that there must be active use of the language, especially on the home front among parents and children. This will prevent the death of these indigenous languages/dialects. Parents should be encouraged to transfer their in-group languages to their children to avoid language extinction and death.

The government should ensure that teachers maintain the use of the child's mother tongue as the language of instruction, especially in the first three years of school. Omole (2011, p.5) posits that "the most communicative language is the most effective language of education". The government should also recognize minority languages in education. The government has developed a policy that puts minority languages at the level they are today. There must be a review of this policy if these languages are to regain their vitality. In addition, the teachers maintained that they use the pupils' mother tongue in explaining difficult topics to their students; this shows the importance of the mother tongue for proper understanding. The government should, therefore, consider the use of minority languages (Omuo, Ahan & Yagba), regional languages (For example, Yoruba) and foreign languages (English) as languages of instruction in border towns. A multilingual approach to teaching is hereby suggested. The researcher was inspired by the work of Ansah (2014, p. 37), who said, "Language choice in multilingual communities: the case of Larteh, Ghana. Although the study area is different, it is related in that it is a border town. Her research shows that in Larteh, a border town in Ghana, three languages are used as languages of instruction - Twi, Akan and English. The current Educational Language Policy of Ghana supports the use of the mother tongue in teaching at the lower primary level. The policy stipulates that the majority of instructional time is spent on L1 (90% in kindergarten and 80% in Grade 1) while time for English gradually increases to 50% by Grade 3. The use of English as a medium of instruction is expected to take effect from Grade 4" (Ansah, 2014, p.37-57). In Larteh, a multilingual approach was adopted for teaching as Ansah's (2014) result revealed that the teachers used three languages as the language of instruction. Her result revealed that code-switching was also adopted by the teachers.

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